



STATE SENATOR **Wayne Kuipers**

30TH SENATE DISTRICT E-MAIL UPDATE



Senator Kuipers Committee Assignments Change

Senator Kuipers is now serving as Vice-Chairman of the Senate Technology and Energy Committee. Majority Leader Ken Sikkema asked Senator Kuipers to switch from the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee so he could diversify the committee to include a member from the East side of the state. The Senate Technology and Energy Committee meets on Wednesdays, and Senator Kuipers is looking forward to studying telecommunications issues.

Bidding Task Force Set to Meet

The Task Force on the State Bidding Process is scheduled to meet this Tuesday. The Task Force has been charged to look into the state's bidding process. Specifically, how the state conducts bidding in the sale of state land. Complications of bids for the Northville Psychiatric Hospital and the bid by Toyota for state land in Ypsilanti were cited as reasons for the need of the task force. The panel will look at the types of contracts put out for bid, costs associated with bids, no-bid contracts and the effectiveness of the Governor's executive directives regarding departmental bidding. The task force's goal is to pursue a bidding process that is fair, runs smoothly and avoids excessive delays. It will also seek to ensure that the state follows an open and transparent process that serves the short- and long-term interests of taxpayers.

The Department of Management and Budget, Department of Transportation and the Department of Military and Veteran Affairs have already testified before the task force. On Tuesday, the Department of Natural Resources will be testifying concerning the acquisition and sale of excess property in their possession.

Senate Education Committee Hears Testimony On Schools' Benefits Crunch

This past week the Senate Education Committee, chaired by Senator Kuipers heard testimony from Tom Clay with the Citizens Research Council. He detailed an upcoming education structural deficit that could be caused by increasing health care and pension costs.

Mr. Clay pointed out inconsistencies in the pension system that allows a person to work for only five years at age 55 and retire with full benefits. He also said that unless school employees' benefits are scaled back to some extent, even if the state gave four percent more to the School Aid Fund in the next budget, almost all of it would be eaten up by what may be viewed as generous employee benefit packages.

School Chief Legislation

Last year Senator Kuipers introduced legislation that would have allowed the Governor to appoint the Superintendent of Public Instruction. However, this legislation did not receive support from the Governor. Recently, the Governor asked Superintendent Tom Watkins to resign, but because it is a State Board of Education's decision, she does not have the authority to force him to resign.

Due to this recent development, Senator Kuipers has decided to reintroduce this legislation in the near future and hopes to have the support of the Governor.